

SOVIETIZING THE BALKAN REGION

241

urged the clergy to support the Stockholm Peace Resolution, 793 and endorsed the formation of a "Catholic Committee of Ac-659 tion" to support the policies of the "People's Republic." The 795 participants were few, and one of the Vicars-general still in office ordered the clergy of the diocese of Iasi to read a declaration denouncing the congress. He was promptly arrested and has died in prison. A second congress convened at Gherghani five months later, after an appeal by Agotha to all "peace-loving" priests and faithful. Months of open persecution and of [798] strenuous pro-government campaigning followed. Under the protection of the government, the "Rumanian National Catholic Church" convened at Cluj on March 14, 1951, and took over the administration of all Roman Catholic establishments. Some 225 clerical and lay delegates attended and set up a "Council" of 27 members which declared its readiness to cooperate with the government in every manner desired. Delegates who approved of this capitulation received salaries and other benefits. Those who resisted were hounded down and imprisoned.

Meanwhile, under a decree of August 1, 1949, action was 732 taken against religious orders and communities. Five convents 659 and monasteries were designated as the places in which all monks and nuns doing educational or welfare work should live in accordance with rules laid down by the Minister of Culture. Once there were as many as 1,800 nuns in Rumania. Virtually all have returned to their families or are active as isolated parish workers. The majority of the monks are in prison. It is 798 safe to say that by the close of 1950 the Roman Catholic Church 659 was a flock dispersed, without shepherds, harried by the secret police and exposed to the constant threat of enslavement in forced-labor camps. Sometimes the actions taken against the surviving faithful have a flavor which is not only bitter but melodramatic and grimly ludicrous. Thus a priest was sentenced to a prison term for referring in a sermon to the destruc-